



January 10, 2011

The Honorable Goeff Hansen  
420 Farnum Building  
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Dear Senator Hansen:

The American Great Lakes Ports Association is an organization representing the major commercial ports on the U.S. side of the Great Lakes. We are writing in support of Michigan Senate Resolution 97, which urges Congress to enact legislation to ensure that all funds credited to the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund are used for their intended purpose - operation and maintenance of the nation's navigation infrastructure.

In 1986, Congress enacted the U.S. Harbor Maintenance Tax (HMT) as a user fee on the commercial shipping industry. Tax receipts are placed into the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) and are intended to provide a dedicated source of revenue for maintenance of the nation's deep draft navigation infrastructure by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Such maintenance includes dredging of shipping channels, operation of locks, and rehabilitation of breakwaters.

Last year, the federal government collected \$1.48 billion in HMT receipts. However, the FY2012 federal budget will only spend half that amount. Years of restrained spending have resulted in an excess balance in the HMTF, which now exceeds \$6 billion.

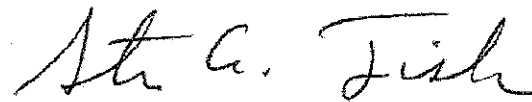
Despite this growing excess balance, Michigan's ports are not being properly maintained. During federal FY2012, sixteen Michigan ports require dredging at a total cost of \$25 million. The Corps' budget provides less than one-quarter of that amount and will only dredge three ports.

A recent economic impact study determined that more than 26,000 jobs are dependent on the cargo moving through Michigan's Great Lakes ports. Without adequate funding for maintenance dredging, sand and silt will continue to accumulate in critical shipping channels. Eventually, Michigan's commerce and economy will be negatively impacted.

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We appreciate your support for Michigan's ports and marine-related jobs. Thank you for your leadership and for helping to draw attention to this important problem.

Sincerely,



Steven A. Fisher  
Executive Director  
American Great Lakes Ports Association